

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 246 019

SP 024 857

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 TITLE An Innovative Approach to Discipline and Management.
 PUB DATE Mar 83
 NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Personnel & Guidance Association (Washington, DC, March 20-23, 1983).
 PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; *Classroom Communication; *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline Problems; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Student Teacher Relationship; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Behavior; *Teaching Styles; Values Clarification

ABSTRACT

The Effective Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Graduate Program for Educators is organized around a series of core modules designed for use in inservice teacher education. The basic skills learned in these series of modules are communication (feedback, nonverbal, listening, self disclosure, problem solving, and conflict resolution), class meetings, accountability strategies, stress management, and role playing. All of the core modules contain a values clarification exercise enabling teachers to identify their individual starting place with these skills. A critical component of the values module is a Discipline Inventory, which helps teachers to identify their main interactional style with children. This inventory presents an orientation from which to work in developing skills for learning other styles. These basic skills are designed to be preventative management strategies for elimination of possible sources of conflict and dissension in the classroom. The second series of modules is organized under different teaching styles which may be oriented toward curriculum, interaction, or intervention. (JD)

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AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT

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A poster session presentation at the American Personnel & Guidance Association
Annual Convention, Washington, D.C., March 20-23, 1983

SP024 857

An Innovative Approach to Discipline and Management

Introduction

An Innovative Approach to Discipline and Management evolved from the classroom experience of two educators working with populations of students ages three to sixteen, including children in regular, mainstreamed, and special education classrooms. These approaches are multi-faceted and designed to meet the differing needs of teachers who in turn work with children who have varying needs. The underlying strategy for the series of modules is the creation of a non-threatening environment built on acceptance and trust. Such an environment facilitates teacher change through individual self awareness as a precursor to examining some alternative ways of handling difficult discipline problems and management situations. Experience has demonstrated that when a given teacher risks sharing troublesome aspects of one past or current discipline discouragement in a small group setting, receives support from other professionals and consequently develops a plan that serves his/her classroom needs, there is a concomitant rise in self-esteem related to being both a receiver and a giver of help and support.

Rationale

The last two decades have found the teaching profession engaged in an ever-enlarging "continuing education" effort. Educators have been "encouraged" to take coursework beyond the degree required for entry into the profession through inservice training and graduate programs. The goals have been varied: most training programs have goals which relate to professional development and increased competence in curriculum areas; some focus on goals which expand the repertoire of methods to use with students; and a few encompass goals addressed to the interaction of personal and professional domains, e.g. teacher stress and burnout. Ideally, this additional coursework will enable the teacher to return to the classroom with new insights and applications, able to generalize the newly learned knowledge. Unfortunately, research has indicated that while a few teachers can integrate and apply theoretical constructs in their teaching, most cannot and do not. Unless coursework is specifically skill oriented, teachers, excited by the possibilities for creative use inherent in theory-oriented courses, may try out an idea or two and then upon meeting some resistance return to old thinking, methods, and approaches. The continuing educational experience becomes one

of discouragement rather than encouragement. Two statements often heard from teachers in these "forced option" situations are, "I'm here to get my three credits," and "I've tried that and it doesn't work."

Just as the issue of relevancy in education for children has been a re-emerging pressure point (Glasser, 1969), so is the concern of school administrators, counselors, and the public alike over the professional abilities of teachers and relevancy of skills educators bring with them into the classroom (NCEE Report, 1983). While main concerns focus on knowledge of subject matter, it has become increasingly apparent that without some semblance of order and an identifiable management system, learning opportunities for students are minimal and generate an enormous amount of frustration and anger in the teacher/student relationship (Alschuler, 1980; Brophy & Evertson, 1976). This problem has escalated to the point where discipline in the schools has been identified as the most serious concern of the American public in the last nine out to ten years (Gallup, 1979). It is ironic that preservice courses in discipline and management are virtually non-existent in teacher training and available only on a limited basis in some graduate programs. Although few mini-courses are available through inservice education, they tend to be limited to one-half day programs (Duke, 1978).

Discipline in the schools and its concomitant problems may be considered on a number of levels. The fact that violence and vandalism (the extremes of disruption and disrespect) on the part of students is so widespread makes it unlikely that educators are dealing with an isolated phenomenon which can be easily diagnosed and cured. Evidence can be abstracted suggesting that what we are witnessing is a complex interaction reflecting differing ideologies, values, and expectations with dissonance both between and within various contextual systems.

In the larger context, the macro-societal level, a clash between the economic and educational systems occurs where students are socialized in school to become active participants of the economic structure, while compulsory education serves the function of keeping adolescents out of an already saturated labor market (Spring, 1972). At the micro-systems level education and family exist in a reciprocal exchange-oriented relationship where lines of authority are blurred and assumptions concerning responsibility for children abound.

The ideological conflict underlying the increase in discipline problems stems in part from the nature of social control and its corollaries, power and authority (Metz, 1978; Tinto, 1978). At a time when individual rights are becoming more paramount in our society, many students are clamoring for the same recognition or rights accorded to adults creating a challenge to the authority structure, traditionally reserved for the educational system. On another level one of the ideological basis for reform movements in education has been viewing the role of the teacher and the educational process as an ameliorative factor in treating society's ills. This has been under attack as being unrealistic or too optimistic. Ironically, the very conditions education was conceptualized to ameliorate e.g. poverty, crime, and illiteracy, have not been alleviated; indeed they have escalated in intensity and become even more entrenched in our society (Katz, 1968).

In the school context one factor that contributes to discipline difficulties centers on the expectation that children today are similar in most respects to children of the 1950's and other eras. There is little overt recognition of the impact of historical influences on subsequent cohorts of youngsters in school (Bernard, 1980). Parents and teachers comment on this aspect when they state, "It was good enough for me; it will be good for you, too!" William Glasser discusses an evolving change in children, viewing them as having become less preoccupied with their role orientations and more involved in exploration of identity issues (Glasser, 1972).

A second expectation which influences management problems and heightens the discipline conflict in schools revolves around the nature of teacher training. This expectation has as its focus the assumption that all children can be taught and managed in one particular way. This aspect becomes particularly clear when one examines the literature available on management and discipline. Typically, there is a single focus and an implicit statement that accompanies each book, "This is the way to deal with children. Try this approach; it will cure your discipline problems." Teacher training programs are often immersed in one camp or another: the behavioral, the humanistic, or an eclectic middle ground. Unfortunately, when children do not respond in a positive way to one particular approach either the technique is abandoned with the teacher resorting to his/her personal style, or the student is labeled as undesirable, learning disabled, a behavior problem, etc. The outcome is

that teachers are left with few options to try. They either retreat to what is familiar/safe, or when the discipline and management maze becomes less negotiable, often burn out.

Programmatic Assumptions

It becomes evident that intervention in the discipline and management domain can be explored, target populations identified, goals determined and programs developed and implemented on a number of levels and within various dimensions of these interactional processes. This particular training program, The Effective Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Graduate Program for Educators: A BASIC SURVIVAL SKILLS APPROACH focuses on teacher development following actual classroom experience. It is designed for the person in the middle—the teacher—who is charged with and engaged in maintaining order in the face of social unrest in the schools. While the problems facing the nation's schools need to be addressed ultimately on a systems level, the intention of this program is to provide support for the middle men and women who mediate between society's expectations and the individual (Freire, 1970).

This program is based on a set of philosophical assumptions that guide its development and organization. The first is that teachers, as individuals, have their own educational histories that heavily influence their classroom behavior. This BASIC SURVIVAL SKILLS APPROACH acknowledges that teachers, like their students, come from a variety of orientations and have varying experiential levels. Its central goal is to build on the strengths that teachers already possess and to increase the repertoire of options teachers have in managing their classrooms, thereby creating more time for the learning process. As a prerequisite, therefore, the teacher's diverse needs must be identified. This is accomplished by clarifying values and providing a range of optional experiences whereby the teacher takes responsibility for his/her own learning, the choices reflecting his/her own needs,

Secondly, this program reflects the philosophy that teachers must take responsibility for the development of diversity in their behavioral management of children. Just as all children will not respond favorably to behaviorally oriented strategies, it is equally certain that all children are not responsive to strategies which have emerged with the advent of humanistic education. This diversity is presented using a sequentially designed skills approach.

A third philosophical assumption is that teachers can enhance and use their role as mediator between society and the individual by inviting participation of their students in the decision making process that is ongoing in the classroom. They, in effect, model the democratic process and actively value a system which advocates self responsibility and self control in action as well as words.

Fourthly, the teacher as a person is valued. This is reflected in taking time for experiences which are enhancing to the personal growth of individuals participating in this program.

Fifth, the acquisition of skills is an actively involving process. The axiom, what I do I know, is paramount in the program; there is little time spent in passive learning.

A life-span theoretical framework guides this program's approach through the maze of issues surrounding the training of professional teachers in management and discipline. It is a developmental orientation that focuses on change, views individual change as occurring across adulthood, and recognizes that development occurs in context (Baltes, Reese, & Lippsit, 1981; Knox, 1977). Some implications for teacher training follow.

Singular approaches to all children regarding discipline strategies are often ineffective due to the variability of individual personalities and responses. Similarly, behavioral techniques that work with a five year old may be inadequate for application with seniors in high school. Any discipline or management program then, that is "method bound" has a limited usefulness. Secondly, a first year teacher, who may be in any one of a number of life stages is coming from a qualitatively different personal and professional life space than a person who has been on the job for five, ten, or fifteen years. Differences in learning styles, achievement and motivation are all factors that must be taken into account for effective training especially training conducted with a skills approach. Techniques of training must be flexible enough to meet teachers at their present level of expertise and facilitate their continued development and growth without demanding one learning approach. Thirdly, the assumption that discipline and management problems occur within a context and are evoked and maintained by that context infers that teacher awareness of the variables contributing to the problem is essential for any change to occur. The one contextual variable that is most often overlooked is that related to

the teacher's milieu i.e. the school environment, administrative support, teacher professional support systems, etc. Any teacher training program in discipline and management that hopes to be successful in skill building must integrate the context of the teacher into its program.

Overview

The Effective Classroom Management and Discipline Strategies Graduate Program for Educators is organized around a series of core modules in which all teachers participate. The basic skills in this series of modules are those of communication (feedback, nonverbals, listening, self disclosure, problem solving, and conflict resolution), class meeting skills, accountability strategies, stress management, and role playing skills. All of these core modules contain a values clarification exercise enabling teachers to identify their own starting place with these skills. A critical component of the values module is a Discipline Inventory facilitating the recognition by a particular teacher of his/her main interactional style with children. This inventory presents an orientation from which to work in developing skills for learning other styles. These basic skills, consistent with the philosophy of this program, are designed to be preventative management strategies for elimination of possible sources of conflict and dissension in the class environment.

The second series of modules are organized under three teaching styles: Curriculum Oriented Facilitative Strategies including skills in Environmental Management, Social Skills for Children, Self Concept Enhancement, Cooperative Learning Structures, Values Clarification; Interactionalist Strategies including skills in Encouragement, Natural and Logical Consequences, Life Space Interviewing, Glasser's Ten Steps to Discipline, Dreikur's Management of Misbehaving Children; and Interventionist Strategies including skills in Behavior Modification, Behavioral Negotiating, Token Economy Systems, Behavioral Reinforcement, Therapeutic Management of the Surface Behavior of Children, Management of Disruptive Behavior of Children.

Although this program was originally designed as a 36 to 45 hour inservice or graduate course, its use is not limited to that format. Modules are self contained and can be used as part of an inservice day or as a portion of weekly staff meetings. Teachers participating in this program are considered to be individuals-in-process on both a professional and personal level. This approach is consonant with a life-span developmental approach to education with an emphasis on life long learning.

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